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NO. 38  
OCT.-NOV.

# TALES



10¢

FROM THE

# CRYPT

FEATURING...



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH



THE VAULT-KEEPER







## IF YOU HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO FIND 'MAD' ON YOUR LOCAL NEWSSTAND...

- (A) Look harder! It may be at the bottom of the pile...  
 or... (B) Ask your dealer to send threatening letters to his wholesaler, demanding **MAD**...  
 or... (C) Send the attached subscription coupon which gets you 60¢ worth of comic books for 75¢...  
 or... (D) Give up the whole business and spend your dime on something worth while!

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# THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH. WELL, ALL I CAN SAY IS... YOU'RE EITHER *FANS* OR *FIENDS* FOR PLUNKIN' DOWN GOOD U.S. CURRENCY FOR THIS REEKING RAG. IN ANY CASE... GREETINGS *GHOULS*! WELCOME ONCE MORE TO THE CRYPT OF TERROR... TO THE PUTRID PAGES OF THIS... THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S MAG. I'M READY TO START OFF THE EVIL FESTIVITIES WITH AN ODD TALE TOLD TO ME BY AN ODD TELLER OF ANY TALE... A TRUNK. LISTEN, NOW, TO THE STEAMER'S OWN SCREAM-STORY... WHICH IT CALLS...

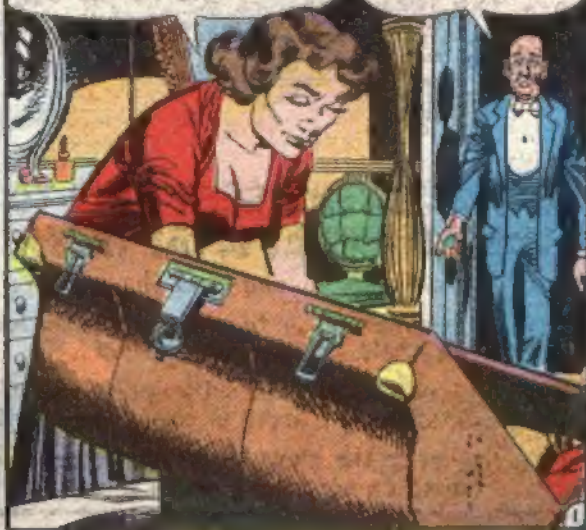
## TIGHT GRIP!



THE LAYERS OF DUST THAT HAD SETTLED UPON ME OVER THE YEARS HAVE BEEN SCRUBBED AWAY, AND NOW I LIE UPON WILMA'S BEDROOM FLOOR, MY LID FLUNG WIDE, YAWNING HAPPILY AND SWALLOWING THE NEATLY FOLDED CLOTHES SHE IS BUSILY PACKING INTO MY INSIDES. I FEEL CLEAN AND FRESH AND NEW AND ALIVE AGAIN AFTER LYING DEAD FOR SO LONG IN THE SILENT LITTERED ATTIC. AND THERE IS A JOY WITHIN ME THAT MIRRORS WILMA'S JOY. FOR TODAY, WILMA IS TO BE MARRIED...

TUM-TA-TUM-TA-TEE-DEE-DUM.  
OH, YES, JEEVES. WHAT IS IT?

MR. ROSWELL IS  
HERE, MISS WILMA...





WILMA IS LIKE A CHILD AGAIN AS SHE FLITS ABOUT HER BEDROOM SINGING HAPPILY... THE CHILD I **KNEW** WHO USED TO STEAL UP TO THE ATTIC WHEN WE WERE **BOTH** SO **YOUNG** AND PEER **INSIDE** ME AND FINGER THE OLD LACE AND CLOTH THAT HAD BEEN STORED IN ME AND FORGOTTEN...

CARL? OH... HE'S **EARLY!** I'M NOT EVEN **READY!** SHOW HIM IN, JEEVES...

YES, MA'AM.

YES, I AM AN **OLD** TRUNK. I WAS WITH WILMA'S **PARENTS** ON THEIR **HONEYMOON**. I WAS **NEW**, THEN. AND I CARRIED THEIR BELONGINGS WHEN THEY MOVED **HERE...** TO **THIS HOUSE**. AND THEN I WAS PUT **AWAY**, UP **THERE**, WHERE ALL I COULD DO WAS **WAIT** AND **LISTEN** AND **GROW OLD...**

CARL, DARLING...

WILMA, MY PET...

I HEARD MANY THINGS WHILE I LAY THERE GATHERING DUST IN MY ATTIC GRAVE. I HEARD THE LUSTY CRY OF THE NEW-BORN INFANT NAMED WILMA. I HEARD HER CHILDISH VOICE AS SHE SCAMPERED ABOUT DOWNSTAIRS. AND I SAW HER WHEN SHE CAME TO ME AND PLAYED WITH ME AND LAUGHED GAYLY...

ALMOST **PACKED**, WILMA, DEAR?

ALMOST, CARL...

AND I LOVED HER. EVEN **AFTER** SHE'D **GROWN**, AND NO LONGER **CAME** TO ME AND SEARCHED MY CONTENTS AND TRIED ON MY SHAWLS AND DRESSES AND SCARFS. I LOVED HER. EVEN WHEN ALL I COULD DO WAS **LIE** THERE AND **LISTEN** TO HER... **BELOW...** LISTEN TO HER FOOTSTEPS GROW **HEAVY** WITH THE **YEARS**, AND HER **MOTHER'S** AND **FATHER'S** FOOTSTEPS **DIS-** **APPEAR** WITH THEIR **DEATHS...**

I'VE CALLED THE **JUSTICE OF THE PEACE** AND HE'S **WAITING** FOR US. THE **RESERVATIONS** AT THE **HOTEL** ARE **SET...**

OH, CARL. I'M SO **NERVOUS!** I CAN **SCARCELY** **PACK...**

AND I FELT HER **YOUTH** **PASS** AS SHE FELT IT **PASS**. AND I **PRAYED** AS SHE **PRAYED...** THAT SHE WAS **NOT** **DESTINED** TO A... **LIFE OF LONELINESS...** THAT SHE WOULD **MEET** SOMEONE AND HE WOULD **ASK** HER TO BE HIS **WIFE**. AND **NOW** OUR **PRAYERS**, WILMA'S AND MINE, HAD COME **TRUE...**

**HERE... LET ME! YOU GO GET READY. I'LL FINISH UP...**

YES. OH, DEAR... I **HOPE** I HAVEN'T **FORGOTTEN** ANYTHING...

JUST **ONE THING**, THOUGH... **ONE THING** THAT **BOTHERS** ME... **ONE THING** THAT **SPOILS** THE **JOY** I **FEEL**. **THIS MAN...** **THIS CARL ROSWELL...** **THIS MAN** WHO EVEN NOW ANXIOUSLY STUFFS THE LAST FEW ARTICLES OF WILMA'S NEWLY-PURCHASED **TROUSSEAU** INTO ME... I AM **AFRAID** OF **THIS MAN...**

**THERE!** **READY TO GO**, WILMA?

**READY, CARL!**

I **FEEL** HIS **ROUGH HANDS** UPON MY **LID**, **SLAMMING** IT **DOWN**. AND I **WINCE...** **NOT** WITH **PAIN**, **NOT** FROM THE **NOISE...** I **WINCE** WITH **FEAR**. THERE IS SOMETHING **ABOUT** **THIS MAN**. SOMETHING... **FERRIFYING...**

**LET'S GO, THEN...**

**YOU **RANG**, MADAM?**

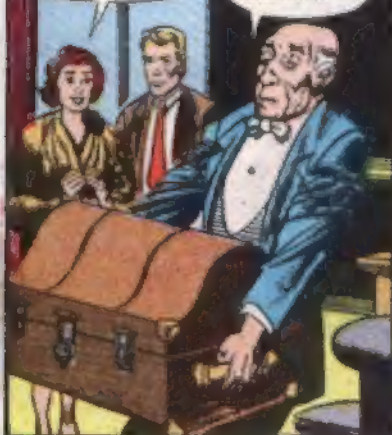
**CARRY MY **TRUNK** OUT TO THE **CAR**, JEEVES!**



NOW JEEVES IS COMING TOWARD ME AND I FEEL MYSELF BEING LIFTED AND CARRIED...

HEAVY, JEEVES?

NOT VERY, MA'AM...



AND SUDDENLY I FEEL THE WARM SUN UPON ME FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THIRTY-NINE YEARS...

JUST TOSS IT ON THE BACK SEAT THERE, JEEVES.

YES, MR. ROSWELL...



AND AS CAR DOORS SLAM AND THE MOTOR ROARS, I SIGH HAPPILY... MY FEARS FORGOTTEN...

GOOD-BYE, JEEVES.

GOOD-BYE, MISS WILMA. GOOD LUCK! HAVE A HAPPY HONEYMOON...



I SIT CONTENTEDLY, FEELING OF THE SILK AND LACE AND FLIMSY THINGS INSIDE ME AND THE WIND UPON ME AS WE SPEED SOUTH... WILMA, AND I, AND THIS MAN...

HAPPY, DARLING?

VERY...



AND THEN WE STOP AND WILMA AND CARL LEAP FROM THE CAR AND HURRY, GIGGLING, UP A FLOWERED WALK, AND I SEE THE SIGN AND HEAR THE WELCOMING VOICE OF THE JUSTICE OF THE PEACE...

RIGHT ON TIME. COME IN... COME IN...



I WAIT, DREAMING, AND AFTER A WHILE WILMA AND CARL COME OUT, AND THERE IS A BAND OF GOLD ON WILMA'S THIRD FINGER OF HER LEFT HAND AND I KNOW THAT SHE AND THIS MAN ARE HUSBAND AND WIFE...

GOD BLESS YOU, AND THE BEST OF LUCK TO YOU BOTH...

THANKS...

'BYE...



AND NOW IT IS EVENING, AND THE SKY GROWS DARK. WE PULL OFF THE HIGHWAY INTO A ROAD LEADING TO A VINE-COVERED HOTEL... WILMA AND CARL'S HONEYMOON HOTEL...

IT'S A DARLING SPOT, CARL!

I'M GLAD YOU LIKE IT, WILMA!





STRANGE HANDS PULL ME FROM THE CAR, CARRY ME ACROSS THE HOTEL LOBBY, AND DROP ME TO THE FLOOR BEFORE THE ELEVATOR, AND I LISTEN TO THE SCRATCHING OF THE PEN AS CARL REGISTERS...

MR...AND...MRS... CARL...  
ROSWELL LOOKS GOOD,  
EH, HONEY?

IT LOOKS **WONDERFUL**,  
DARLING...



NOW WE ARE ALONE...WILMA AND I AND CARL...  
ALONE IN THIS HOTEL SUITE. AND SUDDENLY THAT  
**FEAR** IS BACK AGAIN...THAT FEAR OF THIS MAN WHO  
HAS TAKEN MY WILMA AS HIS BRIDE...

**TIRED**,  
DEAR?

**VERY...**



WILMA'S NERVOUS FINGERS LIFT MY LID AND SHE RUMAGES THROUGH ME, LIFTING OUT HER PRETTIEST GOWN. FOR THIS IS THE NIGHT WE'VE BOTH DREAMED OF...WILMA'S WEDDING NIGHT...

WILMA?

YES, CARL? WHAT  
**GASP...**



CARL STANDS BEFORE WILMA, THE GLEAMING AXE THAT HE'S JUST TAKEN FROM HIS BAG IN HIS HAND

CARL? THAT  
**AXE...**

I'M GOING TO  
**KILL YOU**,  
WILMA...



CARL!  
YOU'RE  
**JOKING!**

YOU'RE A **FOOL**,  
WILMA! DID YOU  
**REALLY** THINK I  
COULD **LOVE** YOU?  
DID YOU? YOU'RE  
ALMOST **FORTY**. I'M  
**TWENTY-SEVEN**. IT  
WASN'T **YOU**, WILMA!  
IT WAS YOUR **MONEY...**



I **PLANNED** ALL THIS, WILMA. **PLANNED IT CAREFULLY**. YOU'RE GOING TO GET **SICK...BE CONFINED TO YOUR ROOM**. AND **ALL THE WHILE**, I'LL BE **GETTING RID OF YOUR BODY...PIECE BY PIECE**. AND WHEN IT'S **ALL BEEN DISPOSED OF**, I'M GOING TO SAY YOU **RAN AWAY**...THAT WHEN I **WOKE UP**, YOU WERE **GONE**, AND THE POLICE WILL **LOOK FOR YOU**...AND THEY **WON'T FIND YOU**...AND YOUR **MONEY WILL BE MINE...**



THE AXE BLADE CUTS WILMA'S SCREAM FOR HELP SHORT AS CARL BRINGS IT DOWN UPON HER BLANCHED FACE...

**NO, CARL! NO!**  
**YAA...GHH...**

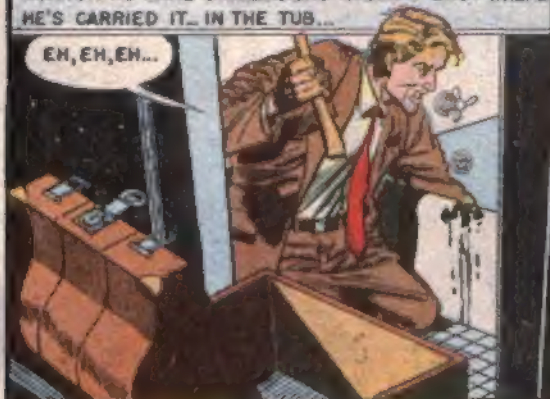
**YES, WILMA...**





I AM EMPTY NOW. CARL HAS STRIPPED ME OF MY CONTENTS...THE NEWLY-PURCHASED LINGERIE...THE SHOES...THE DRESSES. I LIE BESIDE THE BATH-ROOM DOOR, MY LID WIDE, WAITING...LISTENING IN HORROR AS CARL DISMEMBERS WILMA'S BODY WHERE HE'S CARRIED IT...IN THE TUB...

EH, EH, EH...



THERE IS A SADNESS IN ME SOMEWHERE...DEEP IN THE WOODGRAINS, IN THE METAL REINFORCEMENTS, IN THE LEATHERETTE THAT COVERS ME...THERE IS A CRYING, AND A SADNESS AND AN ANGER. I FEARED THIS MAN. I FEARED FOR WILMA. NOW SHE LIES DEAD, BEING RENT ASUNDER BY THIS MAD MANIAC. SUDDENLY, I DESPISE HIM...DESPISE HIM WITH EVERY RIVET AND SCREW IN MY BODY...

INTO THE TRUNK YOU GO...



I RECOIL AS THE DISMEMBERED SECTION OF WILMA'S ONCE PROUD BODY DROPS INSIDE ME AND I FEEL ITS SOFTNESS AND THE FLUID THAT FLOWS FROM IT. I SLAM MY LID DOWN IN FRIGHT AND LOATHING AND...

YEOWWWW



AND SUDDENLY, AMID MY SADNESS, THERE IS GLEE. I HAVE HURT THIS MADMAN WHO HAS TAKEN MY LOVED ONE FROM ME. I CAN HURT HIM AGAIN...

BLASTED @!X!! TRUNK! STAY OPEN, BLAST YOU...



ANOTHER PART OF WILMA IS TOSSED WITHIN ME AND AGAIN I SLAM MY LID SHUT UPON HIS CURSED BLOODY PAW...

y-i-l-l-l-l...



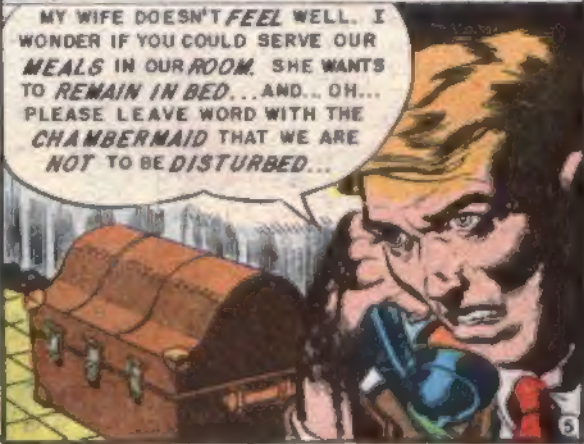
NOW CARL HAS JAMMED A STICK INTO MY MOUTH...FORCING MY LID TO STAY OPEN...PREVENTING ME FROM HURTING HIM. BUT THERE ARE OTHER WAYS. I WILL WAIT. HE FILLS ME WITH WILMA'S SEVERED REMAINS AND I EMBRACE THEM LOVINGLY...

THERE! DONE! NOW TO SHUT AND LOCK IT... AND CLEAN UP THE PLACE...



I LIE LOCKED...WAITING...THE SLIMY GRUE INSIDE ME. I LISTEN AS CARL PHONES DOWN TO THE DESK...

MY WIFE DOESN'T FEEL WELL. I WONDER IF YOU COULD SERVE OUR MEALS IN OUR ROOM. SHE WANTS TO REMAIN IN BED...AND...OH... PLEASE LEAVE WORD WITH THE CHAMBERMAID THAT WE ARE NOT TO BE DISTURBED...





CARL IS OLEVER... VERY CLEVER. HE HAS TAKEN PILLOWS AND LAID THEM NEATLY UPON THE BED AND COVERED THEM WITH BLANKETS SO THAT IT APPEARS AS IF WILMA LIES THERE...

YOUR DINNER, MR. ROSWELL...

OH, THANK YOU. SHHH, MRS. ROSWELL IS ASLEEP IN THERE...



AND EVERY 30 SECONDS, HE COMES TO ME AND UNLOCKS ME AND REMOVES A DISMEMBERED SECTION OF WILMA'S BODY AND WRAPS IT CAREFULLY IN THE PAPER HE'S BROUGHT FOR THE PURPOSE AND GOES OUT FOR A 'WALK'...

LOVELY DAY, MR. ROSWELL. HOW'S MRS. ROSWELL?

MUCH BETTER. REMEMBER, SHE'S NOT TO BE DISTURBED!



AND NO ONE SUSPECTS THE TRUTH. ONLY I KNOW THE GRISLY TRUTH. THE DAYS PASS. THE PARTS INSIDE ME ARE SLOWLY DISAPPEARING. AND I GROW DESPERATE. I MUST THWART THIS FIEND. EXPOSE HIM...

EH, EH. TIME FOR ANOTHER WALK. I'LL... I'LL... WHAT THE...



CARL STRUGGLES WITH THE LOCK BUT I HAVE JAMMED IT WELL. HE CURSES... KICKS ME...



BUT MY LOCK HOLDS FAST. AND NOW CARL IS DESPERATE. THIS WILL CALL FOR A CHANGE OF PLANS. I LISTEN AS HE PHONES...

ER... DESK? OH, WILL YOU SEND UP A BOY? MY WIFE IS FEELING BETTER NOW AND WE'LL BE CHECKING OUT IN THE MORNING. WE HAVE A TRUNK UP HERE WE'D LIKE TO SEND ON AHEAD...



THE BELLBOY ARRIVES WITH HIS DOLLY, AND I FEEL MYSELF LIFTED AND FEEL WILMA'S DRIED AND RIGID REMAINS SHIFT WITHIN ME...

TAKE IT DOWN TO THE EXPRESS OFFICE, SON. HERE'S THE ADDRESS IT GOES TO...

YES, SIR...



AND NOW I AM BEING WHEELED OUT OF THE ELEVATOR... ACROSS THE CROWDED LOBBY. THIS IS WHAT I PLANNED. THIS IS WHAT WILL EXPOSE MY LOVED ONE'S MURDERER. I SNAP OPEN MY LOCK... SWING WIDE MY LID...





THE LOBBY OF THIS PLACID HONEYMOON HOTEL REVERBERATES WITH SCREAMS AS I SPILL FORTH MY BLOOD-STAINED GORY CONTENTS UPON THE PLUSHLY CARPETED FLOOR...

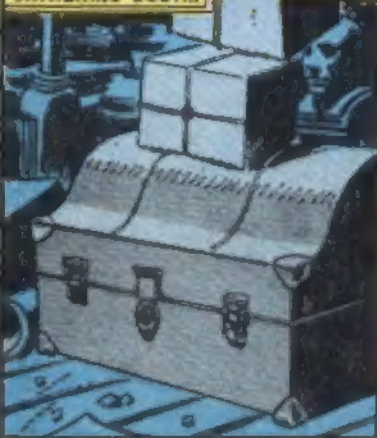


AND UP ABOVE, CARL HEARS THE SCREAMS AND KNOWS THAT THE TRUTH IS OUT... THAT HIS HORRENDOUS DEED HAS BEEN DISCOVERED. AND HE MAKES HIS EXIT...

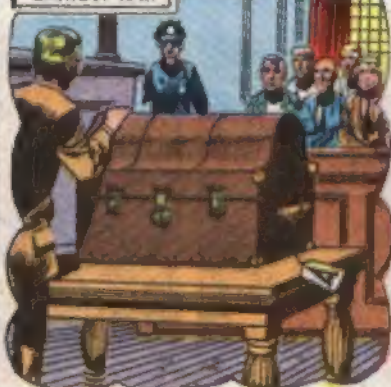


I BETTER GET OUT OF HERE...

AND NOW IT IS FOUR YEARS LATER. ONCE MORE I LIE IN DARKNESS GATHERING DUST...



I LIE IN A WAREHOUSE WHERE THE POLICE HAVE STORED ME UNTIL THEY CAN CATCH CARL AND BRING HIM TO TRIAL AND PUT ME UP AS 'EXHIBIT A'...



I LIE THROUGH THE YEARS AND I WAIT. BUT NO ONE COMES FOR ME. NO ONE COMES TO TAKE ME OUT INTO THE SUNLIGHT. AND I GROW ANGRY AND HUNGER FOR REVENGE... MINE AND WILMA'S REVENGE...



SHUT UP, YOU FOOL. THIS WAY...

WHAT A HAUL...

VOICES. VOICES IN THE DARKNESS. AND ONE VOICE IS FAMILIAR. TWO SHADOWS WITH GLEAMING FLASHLIGHTS MOVE TOWARD ME WHERE I LIE AMONG WARDROBES OF MINK COATS AND BOXES OF STOLEN ARTICLES THAT THE POLICE HAVE RECOVERED AND ARE HOLDING FOR THEIR CLAIMANTS...



I TOLD YOU WE'D FIND PLENTY IN HERE, CARL!

YEAH!

THAT NAME. THAT VOICE. FOR FOUR YEARS I HAVE WAITED, STILL FEELING WILMA'S GORY REMAINS WITHIN ME... STILL HATING... STILL PRAYING FOR REVENGE. AND NOW, CARL ROSWELL IS HERE... BESIDE ME, I SHUDDER...



WHAT THE...

LOOK OUT..!



THE BOXES PILED UPON ME TUMBLE WITH A CLATTER TO THE FLOOR. SOMEWHERE A VOICE CALLS OUT...



WHO'S THERE!?

HIDE... QUICK!

I FEEL ROUGH HANDS UPON MY LID... FAMILIAR ROUGH HANDS... CARL'S HANDS. HE SWINGS ME OPEN, STEPS INTO ME, AND I SWALLOW HIM GREEDILY...

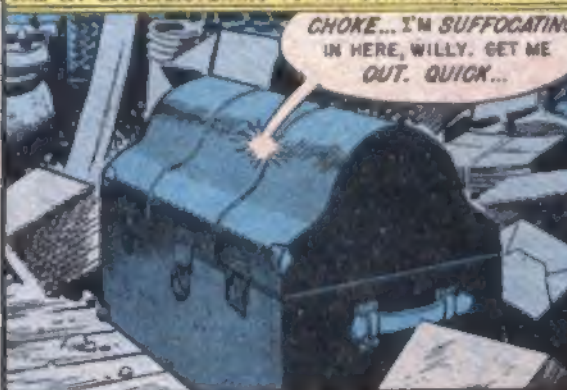


HE BRINGS THE LID DOWN... CRINGING SILENTLY... INSIDE ME... LISTENING...



HMMPH! MUSTA BEEN A CAT...

THE FOOTSTEPS DISAPPEAR. CARL TRIES TO OPEN THE LID. BUT I HAVE HIM NOW. I WON'T LET HIM GO. I JAM MY LOCK... LISTENING TO HIM STRUGGLE...



CHOKED... I'M SUFFOCATING IN HERE, WILLY. GET ME OUT. QUICK...

BUT WILLY DOESN'T ANSWER. WILLY HAS RUN OFF, LEAVING CARL TO HIS FATE. CARL GASPS. THE AIR GROWS THIN. FINALLY... IN DESPERATION HE PULLS HIS GUN... FIRING IT THROUGH MY SIDES...



GASP... NEED AIR... GASP... BETTER TO... CHOKED... CHANCE BEING CAUGHT THAN...

AND NOW I TAKE MY REVENGE. I BREATHE DEEP AND THEN EXHALE. I EXHALE ALL OF THE HATE AND LOATHING AND DESIRE FOR REVENGE WITHIN ME. AND I SHRINK. MY SIDES CLOSE DOWN AND MY TOP SHRINKS DOWN AND I GROW SMALL AND CARL SCREAMS UNTIL HE CANNOT SCREAM ANY MORE AND HIS FLESH OOOZES FROM THE BULLET HOLES LIKE ICING FROM A BAKER'S DECORATING BAG. AND WHEN THEY COME, THEY FIND ME... A TINY BOX WITH A MOLD OF COMPRESSED BONE INSIDE ME AND A THOUSAND YARDS OF FLESH-RIBBON AROUND ME...



CHOKED...

HEH, HEH. YEP, KIDDIES. WILMA'S OLD TRUNK SHUT CARL UP, ALL RIGHT. ANYBODY CARE FOR A FOOT SQUARE SONE CUBE? IF YOU COULD FIND A MATE FOR IT, YOU COULD MARK 'EM WITH SPOTS AND HAVE A HECK OF A GRAP GAME. WO? AW! OKAY... I'LL USE IT AS A PAPER-WEIGHT TO HOLD DOWN MY NEXT YARN TILL WE MEET AGAIN LATER ON IN MY MUCK MAG. RIGHT NOW, THE VAULT-KEEPER



AWAITS WITH HIS OFFERING, I'LL BE SHOVELING OFF... TILL WE REEK AGAIN. 'BYE!



# THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEH, HEH! YEP, CREEPS. IT'S YOUR SCREAM-STORY-TELLER IN THE VAULT OF HORROR, THE VAULT-KEEPER, READY TO ENTERTAIN YOU WITH ONE OF MY GREEPY COLLECTORS' ITEMS. FOR MY SPOT IN C.K.'S MAG... ER... MAG, I HAVE CHOSEN A GAY TALE OF MARDI GRAS MORBIDITY, ENTITLED...

## ...ONLY SKIN DEEP!

HERBERT HAD MADE UP HIS MIND. THIS WOULD BE THE LAST TIME HE WOULD COME TO NEW ORLEANS FOR MARDI GRAS WEEK AND SIT IN THIS CROWDED CAFE... WHERE HE'D FIRST MET SUZANNE... AND WAIT FOR HER. THIS WOULD BE THE LAST LONELY YEAR HE'D SPEND, DREAMING THROUGH THE SPRING AND SUMMER AND FALL UNTIL FEBRUARY ROLLED AROUND AGAIN AND HE'D RUSH SOUTH FOR ONE HEAVENLY WEEK. YES, FIVE YEARS WAS LONG ENOUGH. THIS TIME HE WOULD ASK SUZANNE TO MARRY HIM. HE SAT SILENTLY, NURSING HIS DRINK, SEARCHING THE MASKED, COSTUMED THROG FOR SUZANNE'S FAMILIAR FIGURE. AND THEN SHE WAS COMING TOWARD HIM, OUT OF THE HILARITY AND MADNESS...



SUZANNE... DARLING...

HERBERT...



AND NOW THEY WERE IN EACH OTHER'S ARMS, AND HE WAS HOLDING HER CLOSE AND FEELING HER WOMANLY WARMTH AND HIS YEAR-LONG DREAM WAS A REALITY ONCE MORE...

SUZANNE. SUZANNE. I THOUGHT ABOUT YOU EVERY DAY... EVERY MINUTE. I MISSED YOU SO...

OH, HERBERT. A YEAR IS SUCH A LONG TIME. HOW'VE YOU BEEN.





HERBERT STARED INTO SUZANNE'S EYES... DANCING EYES, THAT SMILED AT HIM FROM BEHIND THE RUBBER MASK SHE WORE... THE SAME MASK SHE'D WORN EVERY YEAR... THE MASK SHE'D WORN WHEN THEY'D FIRST MET, FIVE YEARS AGO...

HOW HAVE I BEEN, DARLING? I'VE BEEN GOING CRAZY... THINKING ABOUT YOU. I WON'T LET YOU GO THIS TIME, SUE. I WON'T LET YOU GO... EVER AGAIN.

HUSH MY SWEET WE HAVE A WHOLE WONDERFUL WEEK AHEAD OF US...

I DON'T WANT A WEEK, SUE. I WANT NEXT YEAR... AND THE YEAR AFTER THAT... A WHOLE LIFE-TIME TOGETHER!

DON'T TALK, HERBERT. DON'T SAY ANYTHING, NOW. DANCE WITH ME...



HERBERT FOLLOWED SUZANNE TO THE CROWDED DANCE FLOOR. BENEATH HIS OWN MASK, HE COULD FEEL HIS FACE GROW WARM... THE PERSPIRATION FLOWING. HE HELD HER CLOSE, WHISPERING...

LET'S GET OUT OF HERE, SUE. LET'S GO SOME-PLACE WHERE IT'S QUIET... WHERE WE CAN TALK...

NOTHING TO TALK ABOUT, HERB. IS THERE?



HE LOOKED AT HER.. BLURTING IT OUT...

I WANT TO ASK YOU TO MARRY ME, SUE...

HERBIE...

THEY'D STOPPED DANCING NOW, SUE AND HERBERT THEY STOOD THERE, STARING INTO EACH OTHER'S EYES, JOSTLED BY THE GAY CROWD...

ARE YOU SURE, HERBIE, DEAR? SUPPOSE, BENEATH THIS MASK, I WAS NOT AS YOU PICTURE ME. SUPPOSE I WAS...

YOU'LL NEVER BE ANYTHING BUT BEAUTIFUL TO ME, SUE, NO MATTER WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE IT DOESN'T EVEN MATTER...

THIS WASN'T THE WAY HE'D PLANNED IT AT ALL! NOT HERE ON THIS JAMMED DANCE FLOOR IN THIS NOISY SMOKEY CAFE. HERBERT HAD DREAMED OF A QUIET SPOT ALONG THE LAKE BENEATH MOSS-LADEN CYPRESS TREES... A ROMANTIC PLACE... TO PROPOSE. BUT NOW IT WAS OUT... AND DONE...

YOU YOU REALLY WANT TO MARRY ME, HERBERT... WITH-OUT EVEN KNOWING WHAT I LOOK LIKE...?

I KNOW THAT I LOVE YOU, SUE... AND THAT YOU LOVE ME. THAT'S WHAT'S IMPORTANT...

SHE TOOK HIS HAND LED HIM FROM THE DANCE FLOOR. LED HIM THROUGH THE CROWD AND OUT OF THE CAFE INTO THE SCREAMING, FLESH-FILLED, GAUDY-COLORED STREET.

OH, HERBIE, I'VE WAITED FIVE YEARS FOR YOU TO SAY THAT...

WE'VE WASTED SO MUCH TIME, MY SWEET. I'VE WAITED TO SAY IT FOR FIVE YEARS...



AND NOW THE MADNESS AND THE NOISE AND THE MERRYMAKING WERE FAR BEHIND OVERHEAD, STARS PEERED THROUGH BOWED CYPRESSES, AND THE LAKE WAS A MIRROR OF BLACK...

NOW THAT WE'RE AWAY FROM THE CROWDS AND THE DIN... ASK ME AGAIN...

MARRY ME, SUE. I LOVE YOU



SHE CAME INTO HIS ARMS AND HE COULD SEE THAT HER EYES WERE FILLING WITH TEARS...

YES, DARLING. I'LL MARRY YOU... GLADLY...

SUE! SWEET! LET ME KISS YOU...



HE REACHED FOR HER MASK... TO LIFT IT AWAY... SO HE COULD TOUCH HER LIPS WITH HIS. SHE CAUGHT HIS HAND...

NO, HERBIE! DON'T! YOU SAID IT DIDN'T MATTER...

IT DOESN'T, HONEY. I JUST WANT TO KISS YOU...



MARRY ME FIRST, HERBIE. THEN WE CAN UNMASK... WHEN WE MAKE OUR LOVE COMPLETE...

NOW?? TONIGHT??



WE COULD RENT A CAR... DRIVE UPSTATE. WE COULD FIND A JUSTICE OF THE PEACE...

LET'S GO...



THEY RAN HAND IN HAND LIKE CHILDREN. AND SOON, NEW ORLEANS WAS JUST A SKY GLOW TO THE SOUTH, AND THEY WERE HUMMING UPSTATE IN A RENTED CAR... LIKE TWO PHANTOMS

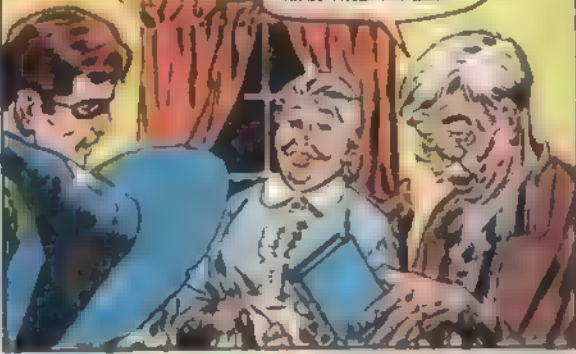
THERE, DARLING! THERE'S A SIGN...

A M MOORE. JUSTICE OF THE PEACE. MARRIAGES PERFORMED. NO WAITING. 'THIS IS IT'



THE OLD J P PERFORMED THE CEREMONY WITH RAISED EYEBROWS. THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME HE'D EVER MARRIED A COUPLE WHOSE FACES HE DID NOT SEE. BUT THEN IT WAS MARDI GRAS WEEK.

I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU MAN AND WIFE...





LATER... THE SMALL HOTEL... THE BRINNING BELL-BOY CARRYING THEIR HASTILY PACKED BAGS... LEADING THE NEWLYWEDS TO THEIR ROOM...

UP FROM NEW ORLEANS, EH?

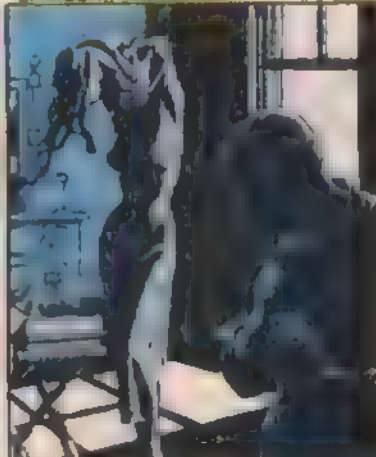
YES. WE WERE JUST MARRIED.



HE WATCHED, HIS HEART BEATING LIKE A TRIP-HAMMER IN HIS CHEST, AS SUE REACHED FOR THE LIGHT, FLICKING IT OFF...



HE COULD SEE HER IN THE DIM HALF LIGHT FROM THE NEON SIGN OUTSIDE... SILHOUETTED, MOVING LITELY... DISCREET...



AND THEN SHE WAS COMING TOWARD HIM AND HE COULD HEAR HER BREATHING... THE SHORT GASPS... EXCITED... PASSIONATE



LATER... LYING IN THE DARKNESS BESIDE HER, SMOKING A CIGARETTE... HERBIE SMILED...



YOU KNOW, DARLING? I NEVER DID GET TO SEE YOUR FACE

I KNOW YAWN...

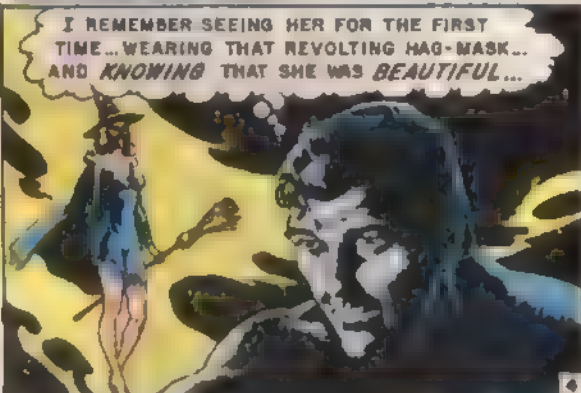
AND NOW ALONE AT LAST. THE SUDDEN EMBARRASSMENT OF THE INTIMATE MOMENT...

WELL, DEAR. DON'T YOU THINK IT'S TIME TO GET A LOOK AT YOUR NEW HUSBAND... AND I...

WAIT, HERB! NOT YET. FIRST...



HER BREATHING BECAME HEAVIER... REGULAR. SHE WAS ASLEEP. HERBIE LAY THERE AWHILE SMOKING. THE CIGARETTE BURNED DOWN AND HE PUT IT OUT. HIS THOUGHTS DRIFTED BACK ACROSS FIVE YEARS... TO THE FIRST MARDI GRAS WEEK...



I REMEMBER SEEING HER FOR THE FIRST TIME... WEARING THAT REVOLTING MUG-MASK... AND KNOWING THAT SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL...



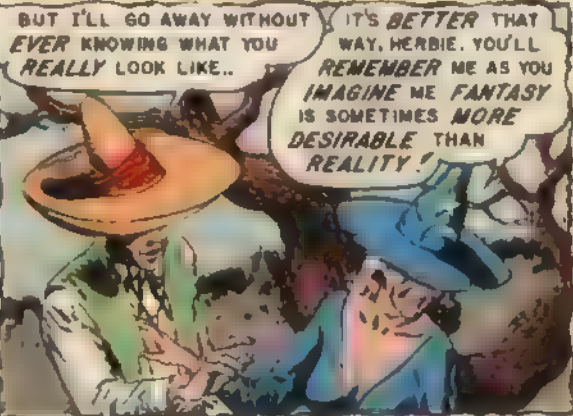
YES, THE MASK HAD HIDDEN HER FACE, BUT IT COULDN'T HIDE HER LOVELY VOICE HER SMILING EYES AND HER YOUNG CURVACEOUS FIGURE MADE THE MASK SEEM SO OUT OF PLACE

HE REMEMBERED HOW THEY'D DANCED THAT FIRST NIGHT, NUMBER AFTER NUMBER, UNTIL THE CROWDS HAD GONE AND THE MUSIC HAD ENDED...

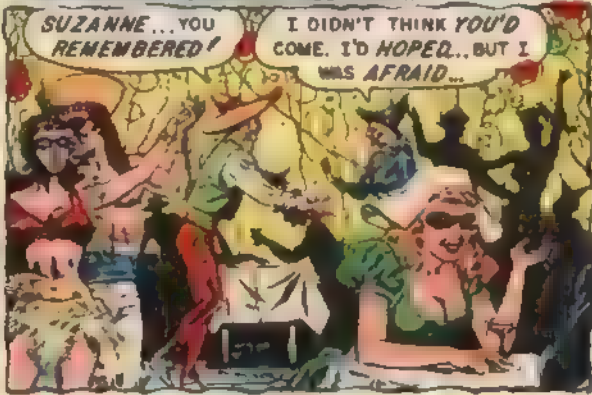
AND HE REMEMBERED HOW THEY'D TALKED BY THE LAKE BENEATH THE CYPRESSES AND WATCHED THE SUN COME UP...



HERBIE REMEMBERED HOW HE'D TRIED TO UNMASK SUE THAT FIRST TIME...



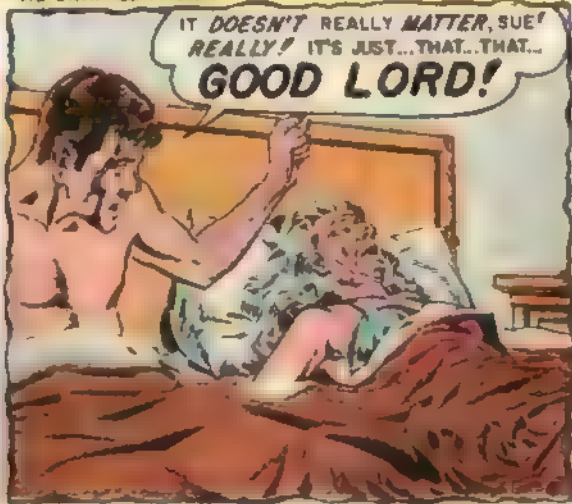
AND HE REMEMBERED HOW THEY'D VOWED TO MEET AGAIN THE FOLLOWING YEAR... IN THE SAME CAFE. AND HE'D DREAMED ABOUT HER TILL THEN...



FIVE YEARS YEAR AFTER YEAR. MEETING AND DANCING AND TALKING AND FALLING IN LOVE. AND NOW SUE WAS HIS WIFE. AND, AND...



HERBIE REACHED FOR THE LAMP ABOVE THE BED. HE SNAPPED IT ON.





SHE'S STILL  
MASKED...



HERBIE REACHED OVER GENTLY...  
UNTIETING THE SILKEN CORD THAT  
HELD SUE'S MASK IN PLACE...



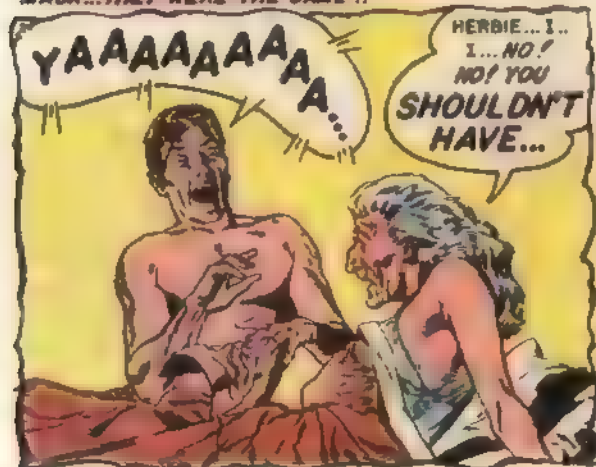
GOING TO BED WITH  
A MASK ON. IT'S  
RIDICULOUS...

HE LIFTED THE MASK AWAY...



OH, MY GOD!

THERE WAS NO DIFFERENCE. THE FACE... THE  
MASK... THEY WERE THE SAME...



YAAAAAAA  
A...

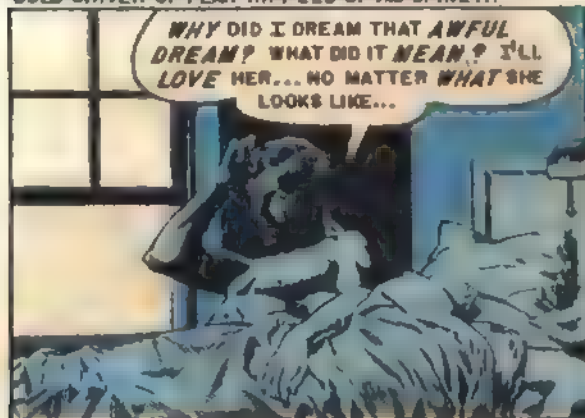
HERBIE... I...  
I... NO!  
NO! YOU  
SHOULDN'T  
HAVE...

HERBIE SAT BOLT UPRIGHT IN THE DARKNESS...GASPING.  
HE WAS WET AND CLAMMY AND RELIEVED...



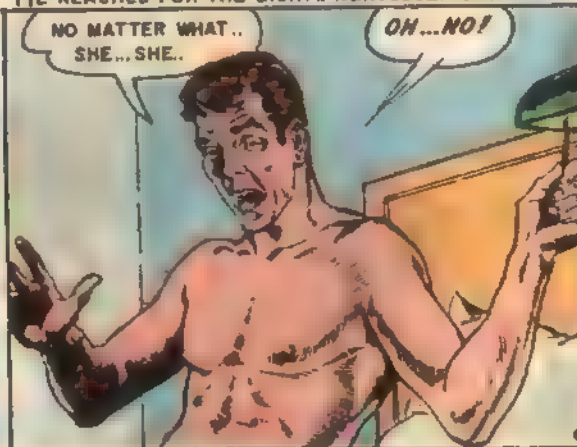
TH-THANK GOD! I WAS  
ONLY DREAMING!

HE GLANCED AT THE WOMAN SLEEPING BESIDE HIM. A  
COLD SHIVER OF FEAR RIPPLED UP HIS SPINE...



WHY DID I DREAM THAT AWFUL  
DREAM? WHAT DID IT MEAN? I'LL  
LOVE HER... NO MATTER WHAT SHE  
LOOKS LIKE...

HE REACHED FOR THE LIGHT.. NERVOUSLY. DREADING..

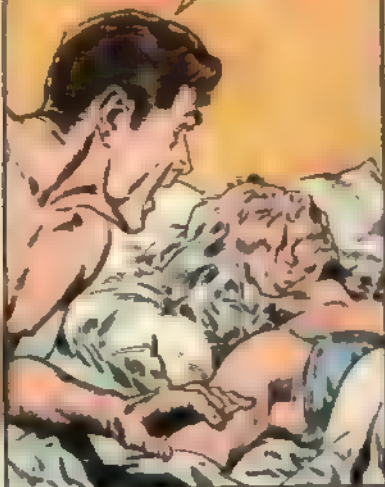


NO MATTER WHAT..  
SHE...SHE..

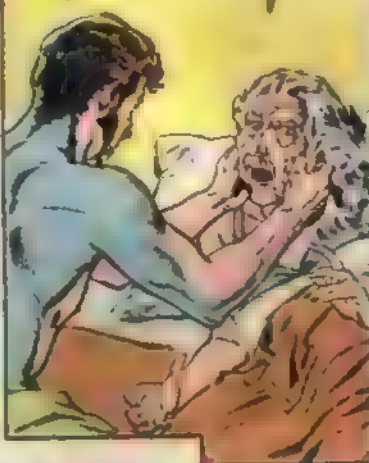
OH...NO!



THE MASK... SHE'S STILL WEARING HER MASK... JUST LIKE IN MY DREAM...



HERBIE STRUGGLED WITH THE STRING... PULLING IT... KNOTTING IT...  
BLAST IT... WHA...? HERBIE STOP...



SHE LOOKED UP AT HIM WITH TERROR IN HER EYES. HE CLAWED AT THE MASK...

DON'T, HERBIE! DON'T TRY TO TAKE IT OFF!

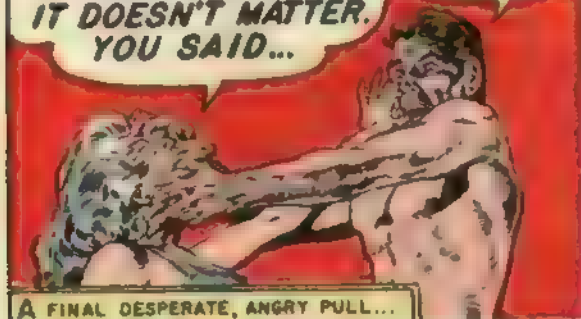
IT'S TIME I SAW, SUE! IT'S TIME!



HE WAS A WILD MAN NOW. HIS FINGERS DIGGING IN TUGGING... PULLING... FRIGHTENED BY THE DREAM. HE HAD TO KNOW...

NO, HERBIE! I BEG OF YOU! YOU SAID IT DOESN'T MATTER. YOU SAID...

IT DOES MATTER... NOW



A FINAL DESPERATE, ANGRY PULL...

THEN... SUE'S SCREAM OF PROTEST... BLOOD-CURDLING... HYSTERICAL... AND THE MASK COMING AWAY...

NO! NO! EEEEEEEEEEE...

NOW... WE'LL SEE...



HE HELD THE SOFT WET COVERING IN HIS HAND, STARING DOWN AT HER. HER BLOOD FLOODED OUT OVER THE PILLOW. HER RAW FLESH QUIVERED LIVERLY. HER EYES GLAZED. HER SICKLY GRINNING MOUTH... NOW STRIPPED OF ITS FLESH LIPS... CHOKED OUT THE WORDS AS HIS STOMACH HEAVED...

I... GURGLE... NEVER... NORE... A MASK. HERBIE...

-CHOKE-



WATCH IT, HERBIE! THAT'S SUE'S SKIN YOU HAVE IN YOUR HAND! DON'T FLING IT FROM YOU LIKE THAT! SHE MAY LOSE FACE! WELL, KIDDIES... THAT'S MY CONTRIBUTION TO THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S NAG FOR THIS TIME. I'LL SEE YOU NEXT IN MY NAG, THE VAULT OF HORROR. BUT BEFORE I TURN YOU BACK TO C. K., SOME SOUND

ADVICE. DON'T TRY TO REMOVE A DAME'S MASK AT DINNER TILL YOU'RE SURE SHE'S WEARING ONE, OR YOU MAY BE STUCK WITH THE CHEER

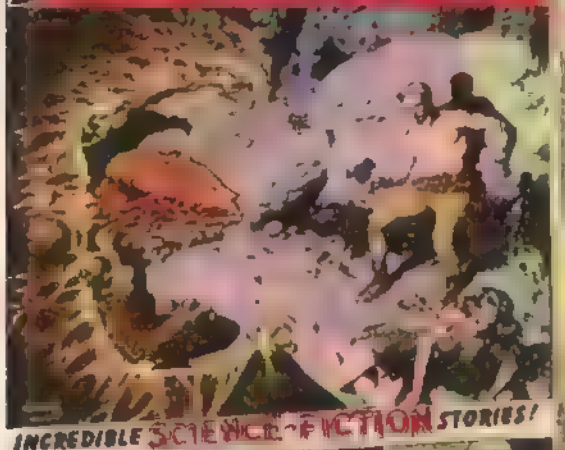




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OF OUR SCIENCE FICTION  
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**FANTASY**

# **WEIRD SCIENCE**



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THESE SEALS  
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As he poised on the edge of the lake, Stan Albert chuckled aloud. This Mr. Karin was a real smart joe. He realized that a small expenditure can often bring fabulous returns if you're not wishy-washy about using methods that are slightly illegal. His offer to Stan was a good example of a shrewd operator skirting with ethics in order to win a potful of money. Stan tensed and his bronzed body arched in a neat dive; hardly a ripple signaled his entry into the water. With powerful strokes he slid quickly under the surface, to the spot where Karin and this dope Foster were fishing from their rowboats. All he had to do for the \$500, Stanley reflected as he surged forward underwater, was detach the bait from Foster's fishing line, so that Karin could land a bigger catch. There was \$5,000 riding on the contest . . . the man to bring in the larger fish would pocket as much as Stan ordinarily made in a year! Smart of Karin to offer half-a-grand just to make the bet less of a gamble for himself! The easiest dough Stan Albert had ever made!

In the greenish water Stan saw Foster's hook: with a powerful surge Stan slipped through the depths toward the object of his pact with Karin. 500 bucks, Stanley thought as he reached out and steadied Foster's bobbing line . . . just to help a man win a contest! A small fortune to make certain that the right man brought in a bigger fish than his opponent!

Carefully, his fingers moving with



great delicacy, Stan began to slide the bait free. This guy Foster was a chiseler, too, Stan grinned. His hook was bigger than had been agreed on; this was a battle between two unscrupulous operators. And he stood to profit from the contest!

Now the bait was almost off the hook, and Stan felt his chest tightening as his lungs clamored for fresh air. The bait was caught on the bent part of the hook and Stan gave a tug to wrench it free. Another 30 seconds was all he could endure without coming to the surface . . . he'd have to throw discretion to the winds and pull the hook good and hard!

Suddenly the line became taut under his fingers and Stan felt the hook slithering free. With surprise he was aware of the glittering metal moving upward. Then a ripping sensation at his throat sent a spasm of pain stabbing through his body. The big hook had become cruelly imbedded in Stan's throat and was tearing the tender skin open with each passing second. Already the water was becoming discolored with the reddish fluid pouring from his gaping wound!

Stan felt himself growing faint as he struggled futilely to escape the torturous hook, and as the life drained swiftly from his writhing body he was dimly aware that he was being lifted laboriously toward the surface. All around him the water had become a swirling mass of blood . . . his fingers were losing all feeling . . . the taste in his mouth was hot, acid, gagging

In his last moment, before darkness closed in and blotted out Stan Albert's shuddering agony, he knew that Foster . . . working frantically to pull in his line . . . had caught himself a really big fish!



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# THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S CORNER

Heh, heh! Seems that our Horror Hit Parade has created quite a stir among you hep-heads! Here are the latest additions to our collection courtesy of Nelson Bridwell of Oklahoma City Okla. Milton Hughes of Maysville, Ky.; Dick Baumann of Glenbeulah, Wis. Patrick McKernan of Germantown Pa. Emanuel Paluso of Brooklyn, N. Y. Richard Renner of Staten Island, N. Y.; Otis Barron of Monsey, N. Y. Roger Todahl of Fergus Falls, Minn.; Ira Bankoff of Brooklyn, N. Y., and Lynn Weber of Woodchiff Lake, N. J.

OKLAHOMICIDE  
BIER-BARREL POLKA  
A-ROUND THE CORONER  
ANNIE GORY  
SLAUGHTER BOY  
I LOATHE YOU CRUELLY  
SLIME-HOUSE BLUES  
THE TENNESSEE VAULTS  
SOMEBODY ROLLED MY PAL  
HOW'RE YOU GONNA KEEP 'EM DOWN ON THE  
FARM (AFTER THEY'VE READ E.C.)  
BETTY NO-HEAD  
WHEN JOHNNY COMES MARCHING HOME  
AGAIN, (HORROR, HORROR!)  
I GOT HER SON IN THE MORNING,  
(TOOK BICARB THAT NIGHT!)  
SEVERED HEADS AMONG THE GHOULS  
WHO MUNCHEDED ON THAT BODY IN THE COFFIN,  
(CHOKED, CHOKED!)  
(THE ONE WITH THE PUTRIFIED VEIL!)WISH YOU WERE WOLF  
OLD CROAKS AT HOME  
CHOKED ME, DRILL ME, SQUISH ME

And while in a musical vein, here are some BOP letters from some of you cats . . .

Dear Cryptsy,

Dig this, man! I think your comic books are real gone.

J Formisano  
Newark, N. J.

. I'd walk a mile for your mag . . . it's real cool!

Judy Albarado  
Chicago, Ill

. Man! That cra-a-a-a-zy cool story, "The Handler," by Ray Bradbury, in the last cool issue of "Tales From The Crypt" was real cool!

Hepster Jim Moran  
Richmond, N. Y.

P.S. Dig that cra-a-a-a-zy undertaker!

. . . I want to congratulate you and your "crone-federates" for turning out such super-George mags

I'd like to start an EC fan club. Anyone interested can write to

Lynn Weber  
Woodchiff Lake, N. J.

Anyone interested can write to US, Lynn! Yep . . . my idiot editors have informed me that, due to the huge quantity of requests (two!) the EC organization is contemplating starting some sort of fan club. The best minds (?) are now busily at work contemplating further announcements will be forthcoming when the contemplations have been completed. But don't worry it'll cost money. See THE VAULT OF HORROR No. 33 for the next exciting episode in this latest money-grabbing effort!

Dear Crypt-Keeper,

If someone doesn't have enough sense to buy EC then he's probably too stupid to understand them anyway

Bob West  
Oklahoma City Okla

I can't help thinking how much Shakespeare missed by not reading or writing stories like yours. They're super!

Ronald Frager  
Dayton Ohio

. How in the heck could a human live in the same apartment with a corpse for about two months? I'm referring to "Curiosity Killed . . ." in T.C. No. 36. Wouldn't it . . . well . . . kind of smell? Certainly, when Mrs. Clayton called upon Mr. Durand, and he opened the door wide open, wouldn't she have smelled the smell from the smell? If not, please explain

Jack Laws  
San Antonio Texas

Chlorophyll!

Dear C.K.,

You have forgotten an important character in horror literature . . . the GHOUL. Won't you try to get a GHOULish story in your books?

Danny Simons  
Ardmore Pa

We may oblige you sooner than you think, Danny!

In closing, the usual commercial announcements: The third annual TALES OF TERROR, E.C.'s horror anthology, 128 pages of chills (?), sixteen complete scream stories . . . not counting 4 texts . . . reprints from 1952 . . . is now available for 25c, your name, and your address! Subscriptions to any E.C. mag will cost you the unheard of price of 75c . . . 3/4 of a dollar . . . for six . . . half-a-dozen . . . issues. (E.C. fan club? They're still contemplating!) Address where you send for all this drivel . . . or where YOU send US drivel . . . is:

The Crypt-Keeper  
Room 706, Dept. 39  
225 Lafayette St  
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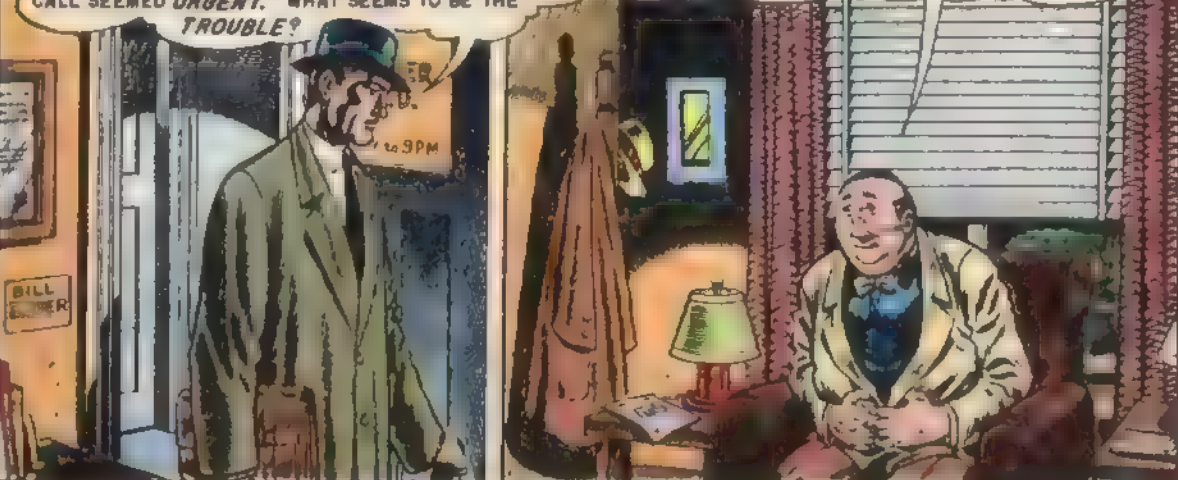
# ERNIE VISITED THE DOCTOR BUT NEVER EXPECTED THE LAST LAUGH



ERNIE SHIFTED UNCOMFORTABLY ON THE LEATHER CHAIR IN THE DOCTOR'S WAITING ROOM. FROM TIME TO TIME, THE EXPRESSION ON HIS LOOSE FLABBY-FEATURED FACE WOULD CHANGE FROM ONE OF ANXIETY TO THAT OF A CHEERFUL GRIN, AND HE WOULD CHUCKLE SILENTLY OR LAUGH OUT LOUD. WHEN THAT HAPPENED, HE WOULD CLUTCH HIS STOMACH AND THE GRIN WOULD FADE AND THE ANXIETY WOULD RETURN ONCE MORE. HE SHOOK HIS HEAD SADLY AFTER HIS MOST RECENT OUTBURST OF HILARITY AND LOOKED UP WITH RELIEF AS DOCTOR FALDER ENTERED.

I'M SORRY I KEPT YOU WAITING, SIR, BUT I'VE BEEN HAVING PERSONAL DIFFICULTIES AT HOME. YOUR CALL SEEMED URGENT. WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE TROUBLE?

IT'S MY STOMACH, DOC! I GOT PAINS! IT HURTS ME... HERE... EVERY TIME I LAUGH!



DOCTOR FALDER SLIPPED OUT OF HIS OVERCOAT

ALL RIGHT! WE'LL TAKE A LOOK AT YOU. IF YOU'LL STEP THIS WAY, MR...MR... I'M AFRAID I DIDN'T CATCH THE NAME...

GEELY, DOC! ERNIE GEELY! I'M NEW 'ROUND THESE PARTS! BEEN IN TOWN ABOUT TWO WEEKS.



THE DOCTOR LED MR. GEELY INTO HIS EXAMINATION ROOM AND ROLLED UP HIS SLEEVES...

MIGHT AS WELL GIVE YOU A THOROUGH GOING-OVER, MR. GEELY. WHILE I'M EXAMINING YOU, YOU CAN TELL ME ABOUT THIS PAIN YOU'VE BEEN HAVING...

STARTED LAST WEEK. I MUSTA STRAINED MYSELF OR SOMETHIN'.





THE DOCTOR BENT OVER THE SINK AND BEGAN TO WASH HIS HANDS...

STRAINED YOURSELF, MR. CEELY? HOW? OH...IF YOU'LL PLEASE REMOVE YOUR SHIRT.

SURE, DOC! YEAH, THAT'S WHAT I FIGURE HAPPENED YUH SEE, DOC... I GO FOR YAKS

DOC FALDER LOOKED AT ERNIE QUIZZICALLY AS HE DRIED HIS SCRUBBED HANDS...

GO FOR YAKS, MR. CEELY? I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

YAKS, DOC! LAUGHS! LARGE CHARGES! I GET A BANG OUT OF JOKES... PRACTICAL JOKES...

THE DOCTOR SLIPPED INTO HIS WHITE LAB COAT...

OH, I SEE!

AN' LAST WEEK I NEARLY DIED LAUGHIN'. I PULLED THIS GAG, SEE.. AND I FIGURE I STRAINED MYSELF LAUGHIN' OVER IT.

ERNIE STOOD BEFORE THE DOCTOR, STRIPPED TO THE WAIST... THE EXAMINING ROOM LIGHTS REFLECTING ON HIS OBESE BODY. DOC FALDER PLACED HIS STETHOSCOPE TO HIS EARS...

SO YOU'RE A PRACTICAL JOKER, EH, MR. CEELY? WHAT SORT OF PRACTICAL JOKES?

AW, YOU KNOW, DOC. STUFF LIKE I CALL UP A NUMBER ANY OLD NUMBER SOME NIGHT..

...AND I SAY...

THIS IS THE ELECTRIC COMPANY, MADAM. WE'RE CHECKING ON THE STREET LAMPS IN YOUR AREA. WOULD YOU KINDLY LOOK AND SEE IF THE STREET LAMP OUTSIDE YOUR HOUSE IS LIT?

OF COURSE. HOLD ON, PLEASE...

SO THE SUCKER GOES, SEE AN' WHEN THEY COME BACK THEY SAY..

YES. THE STREET LAMP OUTSIDE MY HOUSE IS LIT.

WELL, BE SURE TO PUT IT OUT BEFORE YOU GO TO BED, HUH, HONEY? 'BYE...

ERNIE BEGAN TO LAUGH UPROARIOUSLY..

THEY...HEH...THEY FALL FOR IT EVERY TIME, DOC. HEH, HEH, THEY...OOOHH! IT HURTS...

BREATHE DEEPLY AND HOLD IT..



THE DOCTOR MOVED THE STETHOSCOPE ABOUT ERNIE'S CHEST, LISTENING GRIMLY...

ALL RIGHT. EXHALE. GO ON, MR. CEELY.

OR I CALL UP A CANDY STORE...



AN' I SAY.

ROSIE'S CANDY STORE? YOU GOT PHILIP MORRIS IN A CARTON?

YES, SIR!

WELL, LET 'IM OUT, HUH? HIS DINNER'S GETTIN' COLD.



THE DOCTOR FOLDED AWAY HIS STETHOSCOPE AS ERNIE GUFFAWED HEARTILY AGAIN...

STUFF LIKE THAT. HEH, HEH! WHAT A RIOT! HEH, HEH! I. OOOOOH...

AND LAST WEEK? YOU SAY LAST WEEK YOU SEEMED TO STRAIN YOURSELF?



DOCTOR FALDER WRAPPED THE BLOOD-PRESSURE BAG AROUND ERNIE'S ARM. ERNIE NODDED, GRINNING.

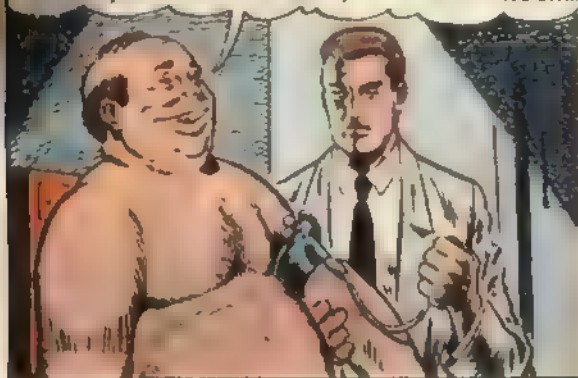
DOG! LAST WEEK I PULLED THE GREATEST... THE GONEST... THE BEST YAK I EVER PULLED. I TELL YOU... I NEARLY DIED LAUGHIN'...

AND WHAT WAS THAT, MR. CEELY?



ERNE STARTED TO CHUCKLE...

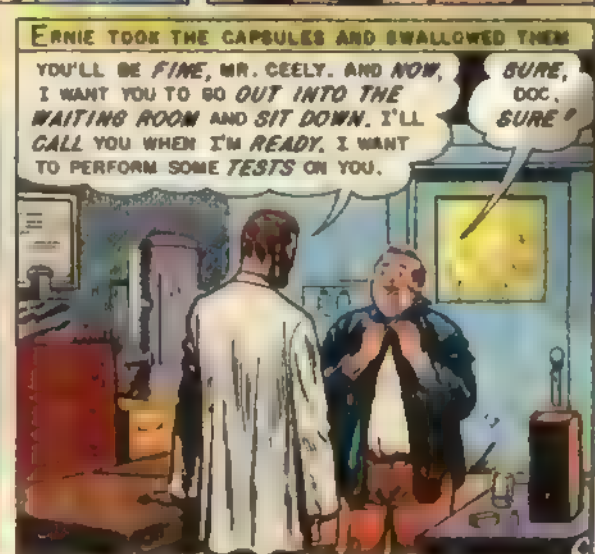
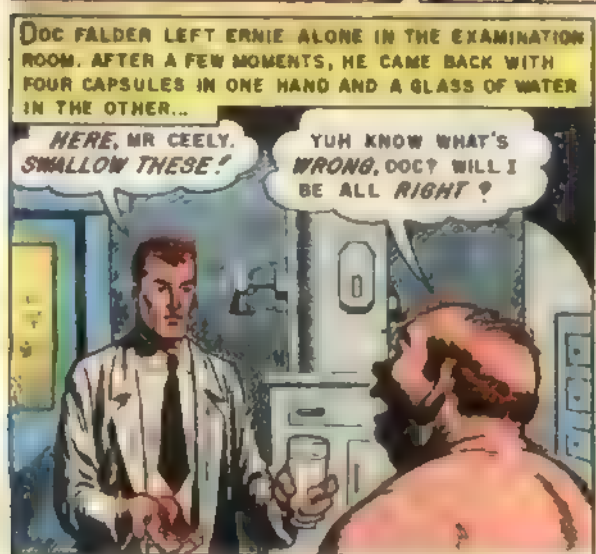
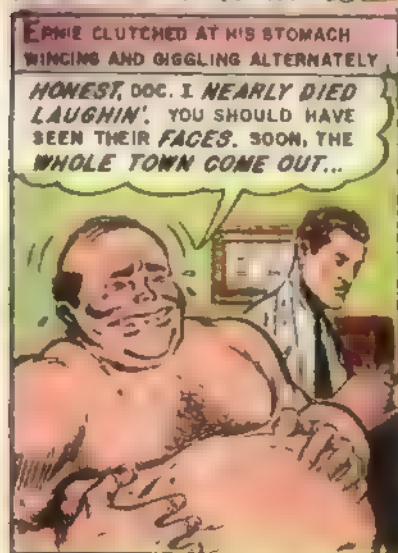
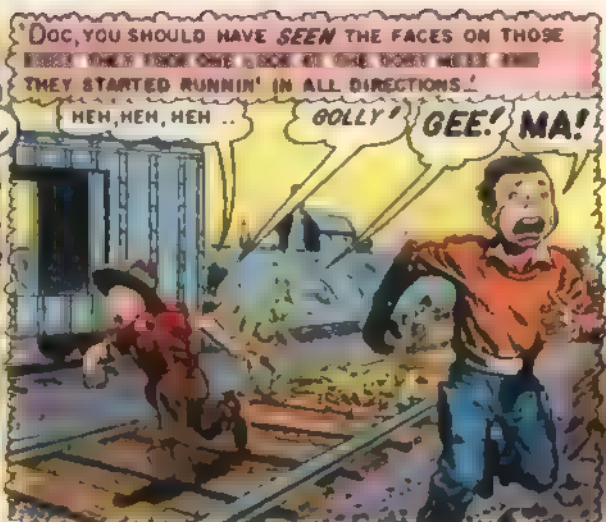
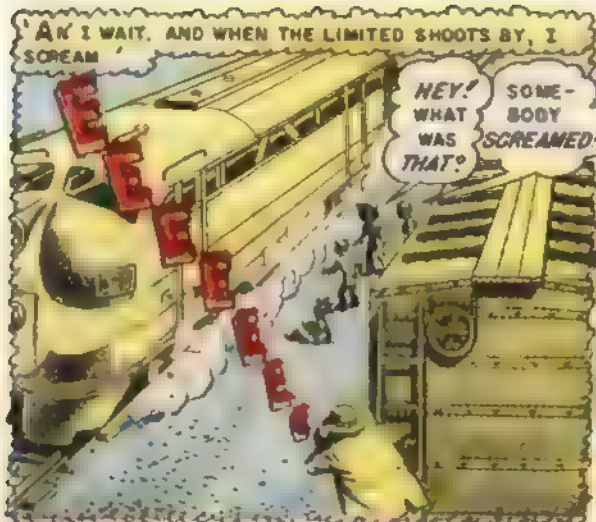
I GET THIS IDEA, SEE? I NOTICE THAT THE KIDS IN THIS BERG ALL PLAY DOWN BY THE RAILROAD TRACKS AN' I NOTICE THAT THE LIMITED SHOOTS THROUGH, DOIN' ABOUT SEVENTY, EVERY DAY AT NOON...



SO LAST WEEK, I BUY ME SOME HUNKS OF HORSE-MEAT. REAL CHEAP STUFF BIG AN' RAW AN' BLOODY. AN' I BUY ME SOME KID'S CLOTHES. AN' I STUFF THE MEAT IN THE KID'S CLOTHES AND I GO DOWN TO THE TRACKS ABOUT NOON AND I LAY THE MESS ON THE TRACKS NEAR WHERE SOME KIDS IS PLAYIN'.





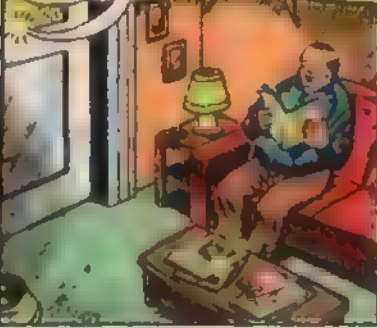




ERNIE WENT OUT INTO THE WAITING ROOM AND SAT DOWN. HE COULD HEAR DOCTOR FALDER MOVING EQUIPMENT AROUND BEHIND THE CLOSED EXAMINATION ROOM DOOR...

JUST RELAX, MR. CEELY. I'LL BE READY FOR YOU SHORTLY...

OKAY, DOC!



FIFTEEN MINUTES WENT BY. ERNIE BEGAN TO GROW IMPATIENT. TWENTY MINUTES. ERNIE FELT A FUNNY PIERCING PAIN IN HIS STOMACH. THIRTY MINUTES. FINALLY...

I'M READY, MR. CEELY. WILL YOU COME IN NOW?

DOC! SOMETHIN'S HAP- PENIN'! HERE! IT HURTS... EVEN WHEN I DON'T LAUGH, NOW...



ERNIE FOLLOWED THE DOCTOR INTO THE EXAMINATION ROOM ONCE MORE...

GET COMPLETELY UN-DRESSED, MR. CEELY... SAVE FOR YOUR SHORTS! AND WHILE YOU'RE DOING THAT, LISTEN TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY...

OKAY, DOC. BUT SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT THESE NEW PAINS I GOT NOW, HUH?



THE DOCTOR NODDED GRIMLY, WATCHING ERNIE DIS-ROBE. HE BEGAN TO TALK...

THERE WAS A FAMILY IN THIS TOWN, MR. CEELY? A MOTHER, A FATHER, AND TWO CHILDREN... BOYS... ONE, EIGHT... THE YOUNG ONE, THREE...

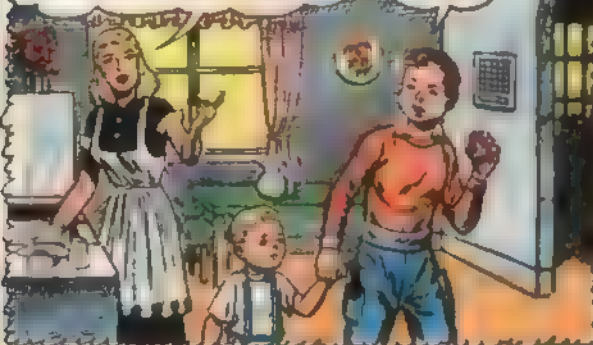
CAN'T STAND KIDS! BOY, YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN THEIR FACES WHEN THEY SAW THAT BLOODY MESS...



ONE DAY THE MOTHER SENT HER TWO BOYS OUT TO PLAY. SHE TOLD THE EIGHT-YEAR-OLD TO WATCH THE THREE-YEAR-OLD AND KEEP HIM OUT OF MISCHIEF...

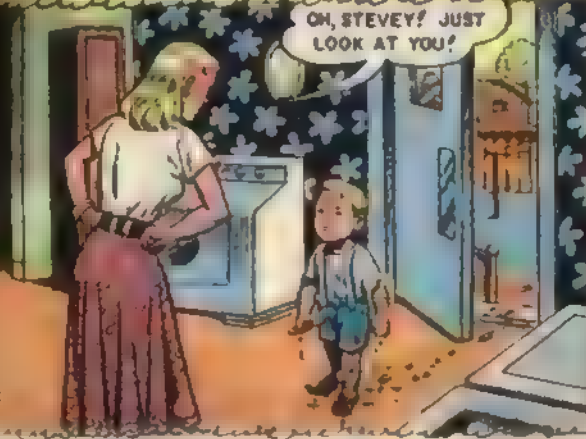
SEE THAT STEVEY DOESN'T GET HIMSELF DIRTY, JEFFREY.

YES, MAMA!



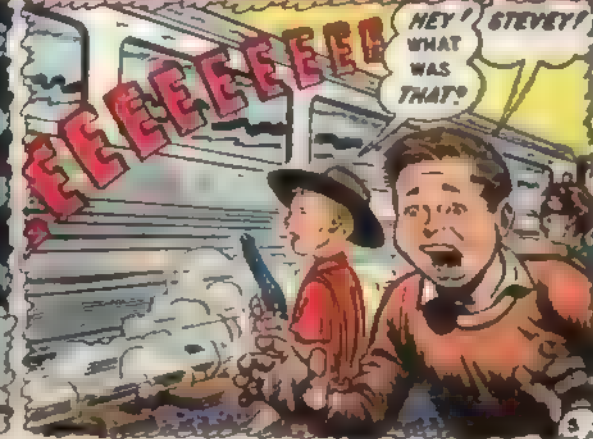
BUT THE EIGHT-YEAR-OLD WANDERED AWAY... LEFT THE THREE-YEAR-OLD. DISREGARDED HIS MOTHER'S WISHES. AND THE THREE-YEAR-OLD GOT ALL MUDDY PLAYING WHERE HE SHOULDN'T HAVE.

OH, STEVEY! JUST LOOK AT YOU!



THE EIGHT-YEAR-OLD WENT TO PLAY WITH HIS FRIENDS. HE'D COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN ABOUT HIS LITTLE THREE YEAR OLD BROTHER UNTIL HE HEARD A BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM...

HEY! STEVEY! WHAT WAS THAT?



JEFFREY THOUGHT THAT THE BLOODY REMAINS LYING UPON THE RAILROAD TRACKS WAS HIS YOUNGER BROTHER, STEVEY! FEAR CLUTCHED AT HIS LITTLE EIGHT-YEAR-OLD HEART. HE STARTED RUNNING HOME WILDLY. HE NEVER SAW THE TRUCK...

MA' NA!

LOOK OUT!

THE MOTHER RUSHED OUT OF HER HOUSE WHEN SHE HEARD HER OLDER SON'S SHRIEK OF PAIN AND THE SQUEAL OF THE TRUCK'S BRAKES!

JEFFREY!  
MY BABY!

IN HER FRIGHTENED ANXIETY, THE MOTHER'D THOUGHTLESSLY LEFT HER THREE-YEAR-OLD SON IN THE TUB WHERE SHE'D BEEN BATHING HIM...

MAMA... SOB...  
MAMA...

ERNIE STOOD, DISROBED, BEFORE THE DOCTOR, STARING AT HIS WIDE FLAMING EYES...

YOU?

YES, MR. CEELY. THAT WAS MY FAMILY'S STORY. THE EIGHT-YEAR-OLD DIED FROM BEING STRUCK BY THE TRUCK. THE BABY DROWNED. MY WIFE DROPPED DEAD OF A HEART ATTACK...

DOCTOR FALDER'S GRIP WAS LIKE A VISE OF STEEL AS HE TIED ERNIE CEELY TO THE EXAMINATION TABLE...

YOU SAY YOU ALMOST DIED LAUGHING OVER YOUR PRACTICAL JOKE, MR. CEELY? WELL, NOW YOU WILL DIE LAUGHING! THOSE CAPSULES I GAVE YOU CONTAINED FISH HOOKS... BARBED LITTLE FISH HOOKS.

NO!  
NO!

DOCTOR FALDER ROLLED OUT THE EQUIPMENT HE'D PREPARED AND SET IT ABOUT THE STRIPPED RECLINING FIGURE OF SCREAMING ERNIE CEELY. THEN THE DOC TURNED ALL OF THE EQUIPMENT ON. AND THE FEATHERS TICKLED THE SOLES OF ERNIE'S FEET AND NUGGED HIS RIBS AND UNDER HIS ARMS AND BEHIND HIS EARS...

DIE LAUGHING, ERNIE!  
DIE LAUGHING!

HEH... HEH... NO... HEH... NO...

YAAAAAAAH!!!

HEH...  
HEH...

AND SO WE LEAVE ERNIE CEELY WITH THE LITTLE FISH HOOKS IN HIS QUIVERING STOMACH, KNOWING FULL WELL THAT THE DOC WILL MAKE SURE ERNIE GETS THE POINT OF THIS GAG... BARBED POINTS! IN FACT, ERNIE... THIS LAST YAK WILL KILL YOU! AND NOW, THE OLD WITCH AWAKES, WITH HER KETTLE OF KRAWLY, KREEP-KOOKERY. 'BYE, NOW! OOPS, ERNIE JUST HAD HIS LAST BELLY LAUGH! A REAL RIB-TICKLER. BUSTED HIS BUT, HE DID!



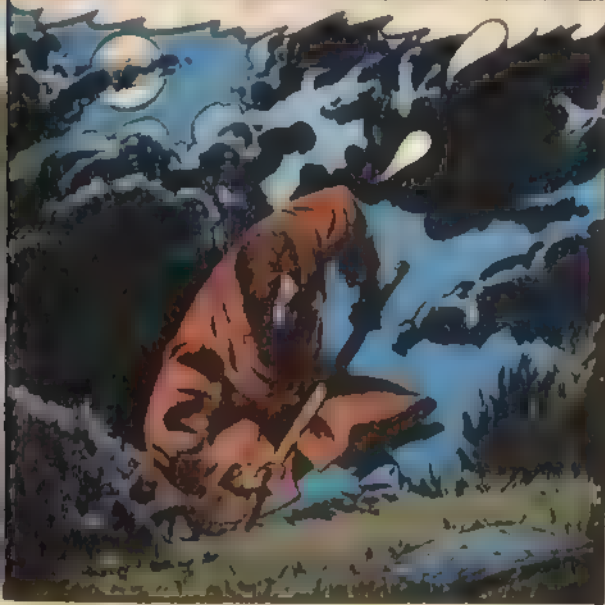
# THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! AND NOW THAT YOUR APPETITES FOR HORROR HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENTLY PIQUED BY MY FELLOW SLIME-SLINGERS...G.K. AND V.K., IT'S TIME FOR ME TO FEED YOU FOUL FARE. SO HOP INTO THE HAUNT OF FEAR, FIENDS, AND YOUR HOSTESS IN HEAVES, THE OLD WITCH, WILL DISH OUT THE DELICIOUS DELVING INTO THE DELIRIOUS, CALLED...

## MOURNIN' MESS

THE CEMETERY LAY SILENT BENEATH A COLD MOON THAT SKIPPED IN AND OUT FROM BEHIND DARK CLOUDS THAT RACED ALONG ON A BRISK NOVEMBER WIND. BELOW, THE MUFFLED SOUND OF DIGGING ECHOED INTO THE NIGHT. A MAN STOOD KNEE-DEEP IN AN EXCAVATION AMONG THE FLAT PLAINLY-MARKED GRAVES, ANXIOUSLY SINKING HIS SPADE INTO THE SOFT EARTH AND TOSSING IT ONTO A GROWING PILE BESIDE HIM. EVERY SO OFTEN THE MAN WOULD STOP HIS WORK, LISTEN, AND THEN... HEARING NOTHING... CONTINUE DIGGING...

I THOUGHT THERE WAS SOMETHING SCREWY ABOUT THIS WHOLE SET-UP. RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING, I FELT IT. NOW I'M GOING TO FIND OUT... FOR SURE.



THE MAN FURIOUSLY SPADED THE BLACK LOAM OUT OF THE EVER-DEEPENING HOLE... ALL THE WHILE MUMBLING TO HIMSELF...

'THE GRATEFUL HOBOES' SOCIETY'!  
HMMPH! IT SMELLED FUNNY FROM THE START! AN EXPERIENCED REPORTER LEARNS TO SENSE THESE THINGS. AND I SENSED IT... THAT FIRST DAY... AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE IN THE MAYOR'S OFFICE...



'I REMEMBER HOW POMPOUS OLD MAYOR MERR STOOD BEFORE US AND WHEEZED OUT HIS ANNOUNCEMENT...'

GENTLEMEN! OUR FAIR CITY HAS LONG HAD THE PROBLEM OF DISPOSING OF ITS DERELICTS AND HOMELESS ONES WHO PASS AWAY WITH NO FRIENDS OR RELATIVES TO PROPERLY BURY THEM...

HERETOFORE, THESE WRETCHED UNFORTUNATES HAVE BEEN LAID TO REST BY OUR CITY IN POTTER'S FIELDS MAINTAINED BY YOUR TAXES. NOW, THIS BAD RESPONSIBILITY HAS BEEN TAKEN OUT OF YOUR CITY'S HANDS. GENTLEMEN...

...MAY I PRESENT FELIX J. COPEHARD, REPRESENTATIVE OF 'THE GRATEFUL HOBBOES' SOCIETY', WHO WILL TELL YOU OF THE WONDERFUL OFFER HIS ORGANIZATION HAS MADE... THE OFFER I HAVE GRACIOUSLY ACCEPTED! MR. COPEHARD...

'I REMEMBER SHIFTY-EYED MR. COPEHARD... SMILING... SOFT-SPOKEN...'

GENTLEMEN 'THE GRATEFUL HOBBOES, OUTCASTS, AND UNWANTEDS' LAYAWAY SOCIETY... THE GRATEFUL HOBBOES' SOCIETY' FOR SHORT, WAS FORMED BY A GROUP OF SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL MEN WHO FELT THAT THEY OWED A DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO THIS FAIR CITY.

ALL THE MEMBERS OF THIS ORGANIZATION CAME TO THIS CITY AS DOWN-AND-OUTERS, DRIFTERS, DERELICTS, OR JUST PLAIN BUMS. BUT HERE, THEY FOUND OPPORTUNITY. HERE, THEY FOUND FINANCIAL SUCCESS. AND SO... IN GRATITUDE... THEY HAVE Banded TOGETHER TO AID AND ENDOW OTHERS LESS FORTUNATE THAN THEMSELVES... OTHER DRIFTERS AND UNWANTEDS. THEY HAVE PURCHASED A SMALL PARCEL OF LAND IN ONE OF OUR CITY'S SUBURBS, LANDSCAPED IT... AND HAVE TURNED IT INTO A CEMETERY...

...A BEAUTIFUL CEMETERY, WHERE THE POOR OUTCASTS WHO HAVE NOT BEEN AS FORTUNATE AS THEY MAY BE LAID TO FINAL REST IN DIGNITY WHEN THEY PASS FROM OUR MORTAL WORLD...

'THE GRATEFUL HOBBOES'... WHO PREFER TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS... HAVE CREATED AN ENDOWMENT FUND, THROUGH MUTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS, WITH WHICH ALL FUNERAL AND CEMETERY UPKEEP EXPENSES WILL BE MET. NO LONGER WILL YOUR TAXES BE NEEDED FOR THIS PURPOSE. NO LONGER WILL SHODDY POTTER'S FIELDS MAR THE BEAUTY OF OUR FAIR CITY'S SURROUNDING COUNTRYSIDE. NO LONGER WILL...



'YES, IT SMELLED FUNNY ALL RIGHT. I REMEMBER LISTENING TO MR. COPEHARD RAVE ON, EXPOUNDING UPON THE WONDERFUL GROUP OF PHILANTHROPISTS HE REPRESENTED... AND I REMEMBER FINALLY ASKING...'

MY QUESTION, MR COPE- I HARDLY: WHY SHOULD A GROUP OF RICH MEN SUDDENLY BECOME CONCERNED ABOUT SOME DERELICTS' FUNERALS?

EXPLAINED, SIR. ALL OF THESE MEN

YES YES THEY WERE ALL ONCE BUMS THEMSELVES. YOU EXPLAINED THAT. BUT WHY WAIT UNTIL THESE DERELICTS DIE BEFORE HELPING THEM? COULDN'T THE MONEY BE PUT TO BETTER USE BY REHABILITATING THEM WHILE THEY ARE ALIVE?

'THE GRATEFUL HOBOES' ARE ALL SELF-MADE MEN, SIR THEY RECEIVED NO HELP WHEN THEY WERE DOWN...

THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE DERELICT IN OUR CITY DOES NOT CONCERN THESE MEN. LET THE DERELICT RISE UP AS THEY HAVE DONE BUT WHEN THE DERELICT CAN NO LONGER RISE UP WHEN HE HAS PASSED ON THEN LET HIM BE RAISED IN FINAL REST...

I STILL DON'T GET IT...

'I REMEMBER ATTENDING THAT FIRST FUNERAL... AND SEEING 'THE GRATEFUL HOBOES' SOCIETY'S' CEMETERY FOR THE FIRST TIME

ASHES TO ASHES... DUST TO DUST.

NICE PLACE, SWEENEY.

YEAH, BEAUTIFUL! IT ALMOST PAYS TO DIE PENNILESS.

'AND I REMEMBER IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED, RETURNING FROM TIME TO TIME AND SEEING THE ROLLING LAWNS WITH THE SIMPLE GRAVE MARKERS

HOW COME NO GRAVE MOUNDS?

I ONLY WORK HERE, MISTER. THE SOCIETY SAYS THIS IS THE MODERN WAY A CEMETERY SHOULD LOOK... SO I DO LIKE THEY SAY...

'BUT AFTER A WHILE THE WORK OF 'THE GRATEFUL HOBOES' SOCIETY' BECAME STALE NEWS AND I TURNED TO OTHER THINGS. THEN, THIS MORNING, MY EDITOR CALLED ME IN...'

SWEENEY YOU COVERED THE OPENING OF 'THE GRATEFUL HOBOES' SOCIETY'S' CEMETERY FOR OUTCASTS AND UNWANTED, DIDN'T YOU?

YEAH, CHIEF! WHAT'S UP?

WELL ACCORDING TO THE OBIT DEPARTMENT THEY'RE BURYING THE THOUSANDTH DERELICT TODAY. TAKE A RUN OUT AND COVER IT FOR US, HUH? IT OUGHT TO BE WORTH A PARAGRAPH OR TWO...

SURE, CHIEF! HEY, DID YOU SAY THE THOUSANDTH DERELICT?

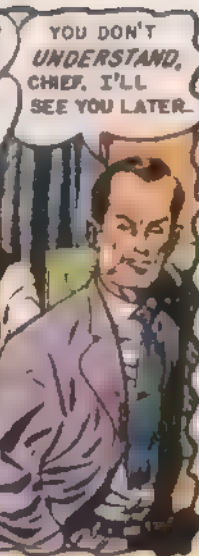


YEAH, WHY?

BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! IT COULDN'T BE.



WHY COULDN'T IT? IT'S BEEN ALMOST SEVEN YEARS. THIS IS A BIG CITY. WE GOT A LOT OF BUMS...



YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, CHIEF. I'LL SEE YOU LATER.



'SO I DROVE OUT HERE THIS MORNING...

SOMETHING I CAN DO FOR YOU?

I'M SWEENEY, FROM THE GLOBE. COME OUT TO COVER THE FUNERAL TODAY..



ON! I SEE. WELL, THE GRAVEDIGGERS ARE OVER THERE NOW, PREPARING THE GRAVE.

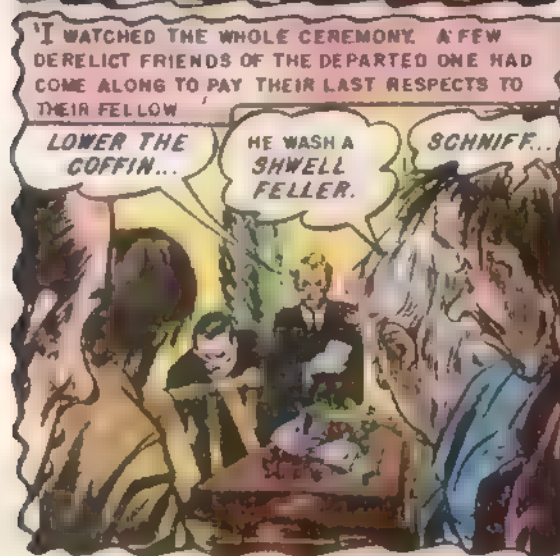
I'LL JUST MOSEY OVER AND WATCH, IF YOU DON'T MIND...



'I WATCHED THEM DIG THE SIX FOOT HOLE.

OKAY! THAT'S IT!

JUST IN TIME TOO. HERE THEY COME!

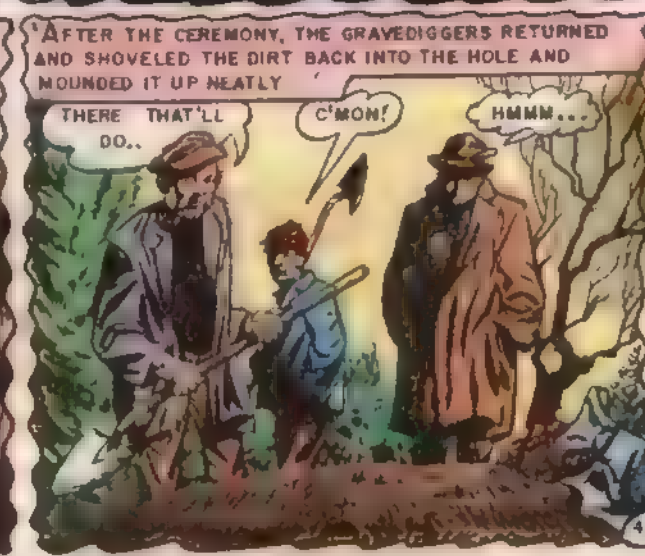


'I WATCHED THE WHOLE CEREMONY. A FEW DERELICT FRIENDS OF THE DEPARTED ONE HAD COME ALONG TO PAY THEIR LAST RESPECTS TO THEIR FELLOW

LOWER THE COFFIN...

HE WASH A SHWELL FELLER.

SCHNIFF...



'AFTER THE CEREMONY, THE GRAVEDIGGERS RETURNED AND SHOVELED THE DIRT BACK INTO THE HOLE AND MOUNDED IT UP NEATLY

THERE THAT'LL DO..

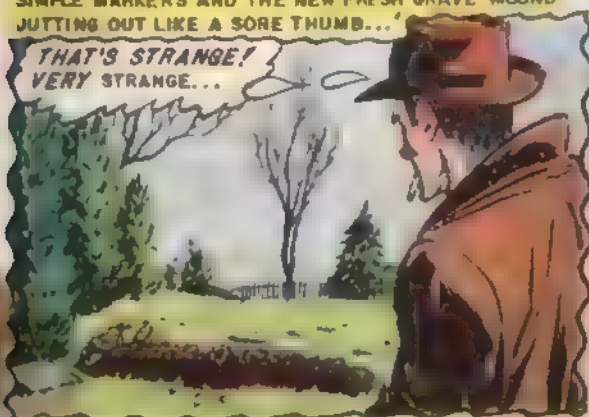
C'MON!

HMMN...



'AFTER THE GRAVEDIGGERS LEFT, I STOOD A WHILE LOOKING OUT OVER THE ROLLING LAWNs WITH THE SIMPLE MARKERS AND THE NEW FRESH GRAVE-MOUND JUTTING OUT LIKE A SORE THUMB...

THAT'S STRANGE!  
VERY STRANGE...



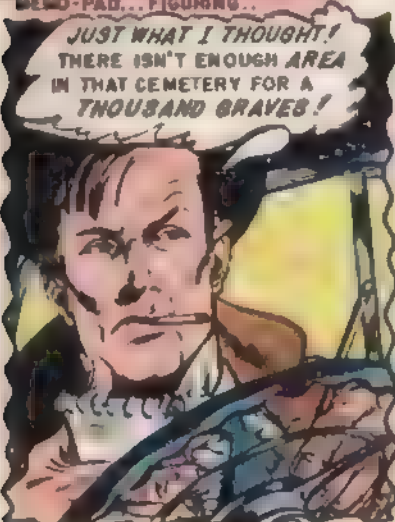
'I STARTED PACING. I PACED ALONG THE GATE ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE CEMETERY. THEN I PACED ALONG THE GATE ON THE NORTH SIDE.

I'M RIGHT. I KNOW I'M RIGHT!



'I WENT BACK TO THE CAR. I STARTED SCRATCHING AWAY ON MY MEMO-PAD... FIGURING...

JUST WHAT I THOUGHT!  
THERE ISN'T ENOUGH AREA  
IN THAT CEMETERY FOR A  
THOUSAND GRAVES!



'THERE WAS SOMETHING FISHY ABOUT THIS SET-UP. I KNEW IT. I TOOK A LAST LOOK AT THE SINGLE MOUND AMID THE GREENERY

THEY MUST  
BE STACKIN'  
THEM... ONE  
ABOVE THE  
OTHER...  
UNLESS...



'AND DROVE TO THE NEAREST SHOPPING SECTION. I STOPPED AT A HARDWARE STORE.

I'D LIKE TO BUY A SPADE...



'I DROVE BACK TO THE CEMETERY AND HID MY CAR. I SCALED THE FENCE, PICKED A HIDING PLACE, AND WAITED... WATCHING IT GROW DARK

I'LL FIND OUT. I'LL FIND  
OUT WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT!



'AND THEN, SOMETHING HAPPENED. SOMETHING WEIRD AND FRIGHTENING. THE MOUND... THE SINGLE GRAVE-MOUND... SUNK DOWN INTO THE EARTH SUNK DOWN UNTIL IT WAS LEVEL WITH THE SURROUNDING GRASS.

GOOD LORD.



THE CEMETERY LAY SILENT BENEATH A COLD MOON. THE MUFFLED SOUND OF DIGGING ECHOED INTO THE NIGHT. THE MAN MUMBLED TO HIMSELF AS HE DUG FURIOUSLY...



SO I'LL FIND OUT WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT! I'LL FIND OUT. WHY SHOULD A GRAVE MOUND JUST SINK DOWN... JUST VANISH? WHY...?

THE SOUND OF METAL STRIKING METAL REVERBERATED IN THE DEEP HOLE THE MAN HAD DUG. HE LOOKED AROUND, CONFUSED...



METAL?! THAT'S FUNNY! THE COFFIN WAS WOOD! AND... HEY! I'M A GOOD SIX FEET DOWN. I SHOULD HAVE HIT THE COFFIN LONG AGO! THIS ISN'T THE COFFIN...

THE MAN CLEARED THE SOIL AWAY FROM THE METAL FLOOR OF THE GRAVE...



THE COFFIN IS GONE! THIS THIS IS A DOOR... A DOOR THAT OPENS DOWNWARD!

THE MAN STOOD UP IN THE GRAVE. HE STARED AT THE OLD HOUSE NEARBY, BEYOND THE CEMETERY GATES. THERE WERE LIGHTS ON INSIDE IT, SHINING THROUGH SHADED WINDOWS...

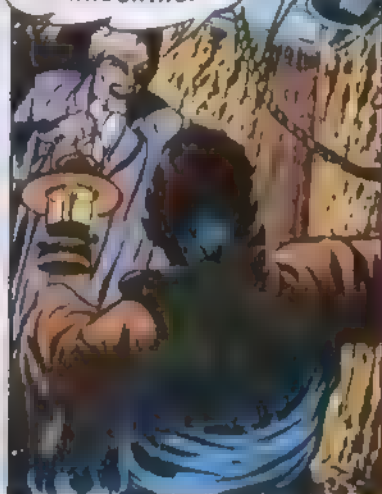


NOW I GET IT! NOW I GET IT! THE GRATEFUL HOBOES!

SUDDENLY THE METAL FLOOR BENEATH THE MAN'S FEET COLLAPSED AND HE PLUMMETED DOWNWARD.



GOOD EVENING, MR SWEENEY I THOUGHT I HEARD YOU KNOCKING.



COPEHARD!

IT IS TOO BAD THAT YOU DISCOVERED OUR LITTLE SECRET, MR SWEENEY.

THIS IS HOW YOU CAN BURY A THOUSAND BODIES IN A CEMETERY THAT COULDN'T HOLD SIX HUNDRED





EXACTLY, MR. SWEENEY. AND NOW, IF YOU WILL LEAD THE WAY... MINDING THIS GUN I HAVE HERE... I WILL SHOW YOU OUR INTRICATE UNDERGROUND NETWORK...

BUT WHY? WHY ALL THIS?

AS A MATTER OF FACT, MR. SWEENEY, WE GOT THE IDEA FROM A COMIC MAGAZINE! ER... NOTICE THAT THERE IS A STEEL TRAP DOOR BENEATH EACH GRAVE LOCATION. ALL THIS ELIMINATES DIGGING, YOU SEE!

THAT'S WHY THE MOUND SUNK DOWN! ER... YOU SAY YOU GOT THE IDEA FROM A COMIC MAGAZINE?

YES. A HORROR MAGAZINE... 'TALES FROM THE CRYPT'. I BELIEVE. IN IT WAS A STORY CALLED 'MIDNIGHT MESS'! UP THOSE STAIRS, PLEASE...

'MIDNIGHT MESS'? WHAT WAS IT ABOUT?

IT WAS ABOUT AN ORGANIZATION OF VAMPIRES WHO ESTABLISHED A RESTAURANT WHERE THEY COULD GET THE BLOOD THEY NEEDED! THROUGH THAT DOOR PLEASE...

THE GRATEFUL HOBOES?? VAMPIRES??

OH, NO, MR. SWEENEY. WE MERELY APPLIED THE STORY TO OUR OWN NEEDS. ALL WE DID WAS BUY THIS HOUSE, AND... IN THERE, PLEASE...

GOOD LORD!

THERE WERE TWENTY OR THIRTY OF THEM... SITTING ABOUT THE HUGE BANQUET TABLE... PATTING THEIR MOUTHS WITH THEIR NAPKINS...

MEET THE 'GRATEFUL HOBOES, OUTCASTS AND UNWANTEDS' LAYAWAY SOCIETY', MR. SWEENEY. WE ARE WHAT OUR INITIALS STAND FOR...

CHOKES...

GHOULS

'RAH, REE, REEN!' SIS, BOOM, BEAN! STICK 'IM IN THE ASH CAN! HIS BONES ARE PICKED CLEAN! 'HEE, HEE! THAT'S THE ORGANIZATION'S GHEER, CREEPS! NO CHOKING! AND NOW, IT'S TIME TO PUT OUT THE FIRE UNDER MY CRUDDY CAULDRON AND CLOSE THE DOOR TO MY REEKING RESTAURANT FOR TASTY

TERROR TID-BITS. WE'LL ALL SEE YOU NEXT IN THE VAULT OF HORROR. Y'LL THEN, GET YOUR DINE'S WORTH! READ THIS WHOLE RAG OVER AGAIN! I DARE YOU!



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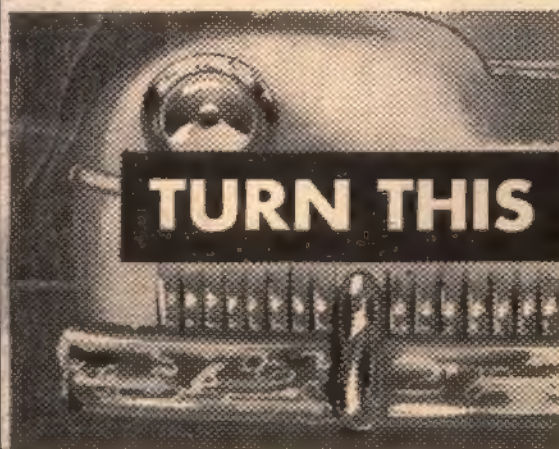
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